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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

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(NOT FOR PUBLICATION)

Friday, May 4, 1931. Agriculture

Subject: "Fricaseed Chicken for Sunday." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. D. A.

Bulletins available: "Homes for Birds" and "Local Bird Refuges".

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Every so often there comes a Sunday when every good American family wants a chicken dinner. Every now and then nothing else will quite go to the spot. The Menu Specialist, who is extra wise about what American families want to eat, both on Sundays, holidays and every other day, reminded me of this last night when I dropped in to talk over meals.

"I've planned a chicken dinner for Sunday," said she. "A chicken dinner with plenty of green in it. The kind of a Sunday dinner I think your radio friends will be wanting just about now."

Wasn't that thoughtful?

Just to show how much I appreciate that menu, I'm going to tell you about it first thing to-day. Yes, first thing, even before I answer the questions that are waiting here before me for replies.

Our Sunday chicken this time is to be fricassed. Directions are the Recipe Lady's own and if that chicken isn't delectable, I'll suggest gently that that is the cook's fault and that probably she didn't follow the recipe I am going to give you. The dinner, then, begins with Fricaseed chicken served with Rice; then, Buttered new asparagus; Chopped cabbage and green pepper salad on lettuce; and, for dessert, Broiled canned peaches; and Coffee. There's nothing that goes better with chicken gravy than rice, unless it's dumplings, and at this time of year light, fluffy, white rice beats even dumplings, especially if a bit of chopped parsley and some bright paprika is sprinkled over the top.

To prepare the fricasee cut a fowl into pieces for serving. Sprinkle the pieces with salt and pepper, roll them in flour and brown them in hot fat. Now transfer the pieces to a kettle and add enough water to cover. Simmer until tender. Then remove the chicken from the kettle but keep it hot while you make the gravy. Blend 2 or 3 tablespoons of flour with a little cold water. Add this to the chicken broth. You may need a little more salt at the point. Add it if necessary and stir until the broth is thickened into gravy. Lay the pieces of chicken on a hot platter and pour the gravy over them.

Next there's the asparagus to consider. Many cooks have difficulty in preparing asparagus so that it will be tender without losing color, flavor or



substance. Too often when the stalks are cooked sufficiently, the tender delicate tips are too soft to hold their shape, so are overcooked, lack flavor and look limp and unattractive. The very heavy tough ends of the stalks should be discarded. To determine just how much of the stalk to discard, break rather than cut it. When the stalk will snap off without tearing, it is tender. Here let me insert a note to the thrifty. Don't throw away these tough ends. They won't be served for our Sunday dinner, to be sure, but they can be saved and made use of in other ways later. The tough skin can be removed, and the pieces can be cut up, cooked until tender and served as creamed or scalloped asparagus. Or they may be used in vegetable soup or in cream soup. To prepare the puree, rub the cooked asparagus through a sieve.

But to get back to preparing the buttered asparagus for our dinner. The problem in cooking this spring vegetable is how to avoid overcooking the delicate tips, yet cook the stalks enough to be tender. There are several methods of doing this. One is to cut the asparagus in two-inch pieces and then drop the end pieces in the boiling salted water and let them cook a few minutes before the tip pieces go in. In this way all will be done at the same time. Another way is to cut the asparagus into stalks of equal length and tie it in bunches with a soft string. Then cook it upright in a deep pan. The water should come about two-thirds of the way to the tips. The tips will be cooked by steam alone. Cook until tender but not soft and mushy. As with most green vegetables, asparagus is better slightly undercooked than overcooked.

Our spicy green pepper and cabbage salad, of course, needs to be crisp if it is to be successful. If you have a few sprigs of green water cress, add them, and if you want to indulge in a fresh tomato or two, peel, cut it up and add it to the mixture.

One of the simplest and easiest of desserts is broiled peaches. If you put up some peaches in halves last summer they will be just the thing. Place the peaches in a shallow pan, pit side up. Sprinkle lightly with sugar, dot with butter and add a little salt. Broil under a flame or bake in the oven until the peaches are tender and just lightly brown. This is such a simple dessert that unless you've tried it you can't believe how delicious it is and how attractive. The peaches have what Uncle Ebenezer calls a butterscotch taste.

There's the dinner all planned. Now we can turn to those questions. Are you ever bothered by floors that are too slippery? One of my listeners is. She says that after three bad falls, she is now scared to death even to step on the hardwood floor in her living room after it has been polished. "It looks beautiful," she says, "but I know that it is dangerous. What can I do about it?"

A properly waxed floor is not slippery. In fact, if a waxed floor is slippery, that's a sure sign that it has not been properly waxed. It usually means that the wax has been applied too thickly, and that the user has not taken time and energy enough to polish it thoroughly into the wood. Success in polishing floors lies in applying the wax in thin coats and rubbing a great deal. One pound will coat about 250 square feet of floor. Polish the floor lengthwise of the grain with a weighted brush, or a heavy block wrapped in woolen cloth, burlap, or an old carpet, or an electric floor polisher. The latter will do this job without the arduous labor required by polishing with a weight.

Who do you suppose has been spreading the rumor that protein and starch should not be eaten in the same meal? Several worried housewives have gotten this notion somewhere and have been writing to ask if it is true. You see, all these years they've been feeding their families meat and potatoes at the same meal, or eggs and rice, or fish and bread and ever so many other combinations containing both these substances. How they wonder if they've been doing the wrong thing. Listen to this letter that just came in yesterday:

"Dear Aunt Sammy: I have been told that it is unwholesome to eat protein and starch at the same meal, because they are handled in different parts of the digestive system and the starch retards the digestion of the protein and may cause stomach trouble. Is this true?"

My reply is to take a glance at the meals the Menu Specialist has been planning all this time. Every meal contains both protein and starch. The Menu Specialist isn't a bit worried over it. She puts them in on purpose and in fact she believes that these two substances and several others are needed for any well-balanced meal. The proteins, such as meat, eggs, fish and, in the vegetable kingdom, beans and other legumes, combine well with starches such as potatoes and cereals. Nature has planned to take care of the digestion of these combination very well, so there's no need for worrying about it. Many of our best foods in their natural form contain both starch and protein. Beans, peas and lentils do. So do wheat grains and many other grains.

A friend of mine in his twelfth year has written to ask about bird houses. He wants to build one for a pair of robins that seem to be looking for a home in his backyard. Feathered visitors may also be house hunting all over your place. Why not provide a few cottages for them? The birds will repay you with their constant presence and cheerful songs. They will also help keep insects out of your garden. There are two bulletins that will be of help to you in this connection. One is called "Homes for Birds". It contains directions, illustrations and diagrams for building many different kinds of houses. It also tells how to protect birds from their enemies. Then there's a new bulletin called "Local Bird Refuges". Birds deserve protection not only for esthetic, but also for economic reasons. The scientists in the Bureau of Biological Survey say they feed upon practically all insect pests. They are voracious, able to move freely from place to place, and exert a steady influence in keeping down the swelling tide of insect life. Where proper measures have been taken to attract and protect them, their population has increased and with it losses from insect attacks have greatly decreased.

Monday: "Fitting Out Wrinkles".

